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# Release, Prevention of Communist Seizure of Indochina

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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FOR RELEASE

Wednesday, April 14, 1954, P.M.

Speech of Senator MIKE MANSFIELD (D., Montana)


In a speech on the Senate floor today, Senator Mike Mansfield (D., Montana) outlined seven proposals for immediate action to prevent communist seizure of Indochina and to forestall "full-scale military involvement of the United States in the conflict." He warned that without such action, the Geneva conference could lead not only to the loss of Indochina but also to a major political upheaval in France, the collapse of western European unity and World War III.

Mansfield said it was necessary to make clear immediately that the only reason for the war in Indochina was to insure the right of the Indochinese states "to work out their destiny in freedom, secure from the threat of alien domination." "In this reason", Mansfield added, "the interests of the French, the Indochinese and ourselves converge."

Mansfield reiterated the stand he took on his return from Indochina last fall and in earlier speeches in the Senate on the three elements essential to success in Indochina: French military and political action in support of Indochinese independence, continued aid from the United States and more popular leadership on the part of the Indochinese nationalist governments.

He said that if these elements had been present "we would be going into the Geneva Conference with high hopes for a successful termination of the conflict. As it is, we face that conference under a threatening cloud of appeasement."

Mansfield ascribed the failure in Indochina to political rather than military shortcomings. He praised the French military effort and insisted that aid from this country had been more than ample. "So great has been



this aid," he said, "it has carried us to the brink of full-scale involvement." He contended that intervention of American combat forces "except on a massive scale" would not make a significant difference in the military situation and he expressed his opposition to such intervention.

Mansfield said that the real failure in Indochina lay in the political realm and he blamed this failure on the French, the Indochinese and the Administration. He charged the French with delay in reaching agreements on full independence. As for the Indochinese leaders, many of whom are French citizens, he said that some of them showed more concern with their own "welfare, profit, and pleasure" than with the problems of their peoples. He criticized the administration for failing to clarify fully our own political objectives in Indochina.

Senator Mansfield expressed the belief that there might still be a last chance to prevent a disaster at Geneva if action were taken immediately along the following lines:

- "1. Declaration by the French that their sole purpose in Indochina is to secure the full independence of the three states of Viet Nam, Cambodia and Laos.
2. Endorsement of this declaration by the United States and other free nations.
3. Resumption of negotiations in Paris or Saigon to set a date for the full independence of all three of the Associated States.

4. Establishment of the machinery for the progressive transfer of full sovereignty to the three states, including optional arrangements to permit the Indochinese to remain in the French Union only if they so elect.
5. Appointment of three separate United States Ambassadors or ministers to Viet Nam, Cambodia, and Laos.
6. Convening of constituent political assemblies in the three Indochinese states with a view to reorganizing their governments on the basis of more popular representation.
7. Relinquishment of French citizenship by all nationalist leaders now holding such citizenship."

In his concluding remarks Senator Mansfield said these proposals were not offered as "a cheap, an easy or a quick way out of the morass." He expressed the view, however, that they could clarify the struggle in Indochina and "lay the groundwork for a legitimate and responsible consideration of the situation by the United Nations."